आपतटीय क्षेत्रों का खनन

1662.**श्री डी.पी.यादव**: क्या इस्पात और खान मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार काफी समय से अपतटीय क्षेत्रों में खनन की संभावनाओं को देखते हुए एक विधेयक का प्रारूप तैयार कर रही हैं;

(ख) क्या इस संबंध में सरकार के पास कोई प्रस्ताव लम्बित हैं;और

(ग) यदि हां,तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या हैं?

इस्पात और खान मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री रमेश बैस): (क) से (ग) केन्द्र सरकार ने खान मंत्रालय में नीति और विधान से संबंधित तत्कालीन संयुक्त सचिव की अध्यक्षता में मई,1993 में भारत में प्रादेशिक जल क्षेत्र/महाद्वीपीय शेल्फ/विशिष्ट आर्थिक क्षेत्र और अन्य समुद्री क्षेत्रों में खनिज संसाधनों के विनियमन और विकास के लिए कानून का मसौदा तैयार करने हेतु कार्यदल गठित किया था । कार्यदल ने दिसम्बर,1995 में अपतटीय खनिज क्षेत्र(विकास और विनियमन) मसौदा विधेयक सहित अपनी रिपोर्ट प्रस्तुत की । कार्यदल की रिपोर्ट की जांच की गई है और इस संबंध में आगामी अनुवर्ती कार्रवाई शुरू की जा चुकी है ।

Reduction of Manpower in SAIL

1663. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the SAIL has decided to reduce its workforce;

(b) if so, the details of the attractive schemes announced to force its employees to seek VRS;

(c) the number of persons in each plant of SAIL and in its administrative office likely to be compulsory retired during the current financial year; and

(d) to what extent the reduction of manpower in SAIL is going to save the company from losses?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK): (a) to (d) with modernisation of steel plants and adoption of new technology, there is scope for rationalisation of manpower in the steel plants. Efforts are on to rationalise the manpower through improvement of work practices, retraining and redeployment.

As a part of manpower rationalisation efforts, SAIL has implemented a Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) between March and August, 1998 and 5966 employees have availed voluntary retirement under the scheme. The scheme is purely voluntary and eligibility/ payment is based on the age of the employee and length of service etc. Manpower reduction alone cannot save the Company from making losses as reduction through VR Scheme also has a cost. The manpower cost comprises the second highest component of the production cost and any reduction in the same would contribute in enhancing the Company's profitability.

New Offshore Mining Policy

1664. DR. B.B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government propose to announce a new offshore mining policy to exploit the mining potential in the exclusive economic zone of the country;

(b) if so, the main features of the proposed policy; and

(c) the measures adopted by Government for the development of raining sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS) (a) and (b) The Central Government constituted a Working Group to draft legislation for regulation and development of mineral resources in the territorial waters/ continental shelf/exclusive economic zone and other maritime zones in India in May, 1993- under the Chairmanship of the then Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Mines concerned with policy and

legislation. The Working Group submitted its Report alongwith draft Offshore Areas Mineral (Development & Regulation) Bill in December, 1995. The report of the Working Group has been processed and further follow-up action in the matter has been initiated.

(c) The Government of India have adopted a number of measures for the development of the mining sector. These include: Announcement of the National Mineral Policy, 1993, opening up the mineral sector fully for private initiatives, both domestic and foreign: encouragement for induction of state-of-the-art technology; amendments to the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957., in 1994; devolving more powers to the State Governments for the grant of Prospecting Licences and Mining Leases; issue of guidelines for grant of prospecting licences over large areas for aerial survey; delegation of powers to the State Governments for renewal of Prospecting Licences and for first renewal of Mining leases; liberalisation of the policy for foreign investment with automatic approval of investment proposals with foreign equity upto 50% (except for gold, silver, diamond and precious stones) and also case by case approval through Foreign Investment Promotion Board for foreign equity above 50% and for gold, silver, diamond and precious stones projects irrespective of foreign equity; rationalisation of royalty rates of minerals making it comparable with international rates; and setting up of a Committee under the chairmanship of Secretary (Mines) in February, 1997 to review the existing laws and procedures for regulation and development of minerals, which has since submitted its report and follow-up action on which has been initiated.

Irregularities in recruitments in NALCO

1665. SHRI SHIBU SOREN: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that CBI was entrusted with the responsibility to enquire into the irregularities committed in the matter of recruitments in National Aluminimum Company Limited (NALCO);

(b) if so, the details in this regard;

(c) whether it is also a fact that CBI had discontinued the said enquiry due to involvement of relative of senior officers of CBI in the matter of recruitments in NALCO;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor together with the details thereof; and

(e) the action taken by Government in his regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) to (e) Government have not entrusted any investigation into alleged irregularities in recruitment in National Aluminimum Co. Ltd. (NALCO) to CBI. CBI Bhubaneswar has informed that a source complaint had been examined by them and closed at their and since it did not warrant a C.B.I, probe. Government have also investigated the allegations about irregularities in recruitment in NALCO and have closed the case in consultation with Central Vigilance Commission after issuing 'warning' to one Director level officer in the company. Further on instructions issued by the Government NALCO has reviewed its Recruitment and Promotion Rules and has made suitable amendments to eliminate the scope for ad-hoc appointments in various cadres.

Financial Crisis in RSP

1666. MISS FRIDA TOPNO: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) after modernisation at the cost of Rs. 5000 crores is facing acute financial crisis and huge loss;